

Appendix table 7-9.

**Correct answers to scientific terms and concept questions: 1995–2001**

(Aggregated percentages)

Characteristic	1995	1997	1999	2001
<b>All adults</b> .....	63	61	62	64
Male .....	69	67	67	70
Female .....	58	56	58	59
<b>Formal education</b>				
Less than high school .....	45	48	48	50
High school graduate .....	60	61	62	63
Baccalaureate .....	72	73	75	77
Graduate/professional .....	81	79	80	80
<b>Science/mathematics education<sup>a</sup></b>				
Low .....	53	53	54	56
Middle .....	67	65	68	68
High .....	78	79	79	81
<b>Attentiveness to science or technology<sup>b</sup></b>				
Attentive public .....	74	71	72	73
Interested public .....	65	64	65	67
Residual public .....	56	54	56	59

<sup>a</sup>Respondents were classified as having a “high” level of science/mathematics education if they took nine or more high school and college science/mathematics courses. They were classified as “middle” if they took six to eight such courses and “low” if they took five or fewer

<sup>b</sup>To be classified as attentive to a given policy area, an individual must indicate that he or she is “very interested” in that issue, is “very well informed” about it, and is a regular reader of a daily newspaper or relevant national magazine. Individuals who report they are “very interested” in an issue area but do not think that they are “very well informed” about it are classified as the “interested public.” All other individuals are classified as members of the “residual public” for that issue area. The attentive public for science and technology combines the attentive public for new scientific discoveries and the attentive public for new inventions and technologies. Any individual who is not attentive to either of those issues but who is a member of the interested public for at least one of these issues is classified as a member of the interested public for science and technology. All other individuals are classified as members of the residual public for science and technology

NOTES: This measure includes responses to the following true/false questions:

- All radioactivity is man-made. (False)
- Electrons are smaller than atoms. (True)
- The continents on which we live have been moving their location for millions of years and will continue to move in the future. (True)
- The earliest humans lived at the same time as the dinosaurs. (False)
- The center of the Earth is hot. (True)
- The oxygen we breathe comes from plants. (True)
- It is the father's gene that decides whether the baby is a boy or a girl. (True)
- Lasers work by focusing sound waves. (False)
- Antibiotics kill viruses as well as bacteria. (False)
- The universe began with a huge explosion. (True)
- Human beings, as we know them today, developed from earlier species of animals. (True)
- Cigarette smoking causes lung cancer. (True)
- Radioactive milk can be made safe by boiling it. (False)

The following short-answer items were also included:

- Which travels faster: light or sound? (Light)
- Does the Earth go around the Sun, or does the Sun go around the Earth? (Earth around the Sun)
- How long does it take for the Earth to go around the Sun: one day, one month, or one year? (One year)

SOURCE: National Science Foundation, Division of Science Resources Statistics (NSF/SRS), NSF Survey of Public Attitudes Toward and Understanding of Science and Technology, various years.